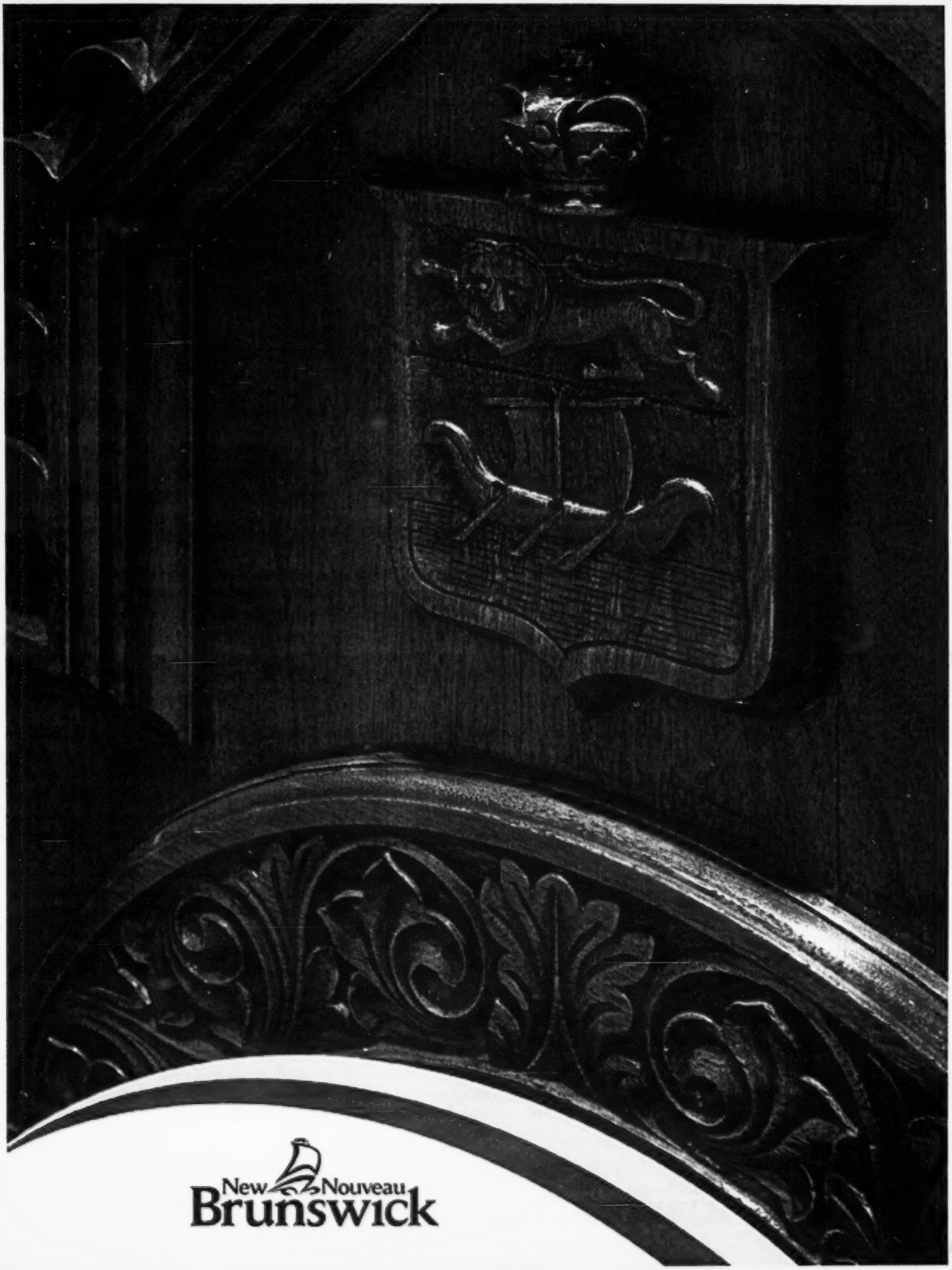
New Nouveau
Brunswick

2010 Speech from the Throne

Mr. Speaker, Honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and fellow New Brunswickers.

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the opening of the First Session of the 57th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick.

We congratulate the Honourable David Alward on becoming New Brunswick's 32nd Premier and welcome to this Chamber all the newly elected members and all members who were returned by their constituents to serve them here in the Legislature.

And together we acknowledge the public service of all former members who are not returning to the Legislature.

On this occasion, we also thank Shawn Graham for both his continuing service as MLA for the riding of Kent and his past service as premier of our province.

We also pay tribute to former NDP leader Roger Duguay for his efforts on behalf of people in northern New Brunswick and throughout our province.

Likewise, we thank Rose-May Poirier for her many years of public service as the former MLA for Rogersville-Kouchibouguac and as a former cabinet minister and we congratulate her on being appointed to the Senate of Canada earlier this year.

Celebrations

This session begins as we come near the end of a proud year for our province.

We celebrated with the City of Saint John and all its citizens as Canada's oldest incorporated city marked its 225th anniversary earlier this year.

Soldiers based at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown and throughout our province continue to do credit to New Brunswick as part of the mission in Afghanistan.

To those who are currently abroad and those who have just departed to join the mission in Afghanistan, we extend our best wishes for success in their tasks and a safe journey home.

Last month, 10 more distinguished New Brunswickers were inducted into the Order of New Brunswick: Dawn Arnold, Wayne Brown, Pamela Coates, Reuben Cohen, Éverard Daigle, Gérard Haché, Gerard Losier, Susan Rickards, Zoël Saulnier and Ruth Stanley.

Over the past year, six New Brunswickers became members of the Order of Canada. They are:

- Gordon Porter, the former chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, an educator and a leader in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Calixte Duguay, a ground-breaking Acadian poet and singer-songwriter;
- Matilda Murdoch, a musician and musical historian;

- Harold O'Leary, who works to enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities;
- David Adams Richards, a world-renowned award-winning author, essayist and screenwriter;
- and celebrated painter, sculptor, architect and author Roméo Savoie.

We would like to recognize Dr. Porter and his wife, Carolyn, who are with us here in the Legislature today.

Governor General David Johnston made his first vice-regal visit to New Brunswick earlier this month. His Excellency took part in the official launch of Learning: Everybody's Project. This citizen-led initiative will spend the next year working to develop a culture defined by life-long learning in our province.

The Governor General recognized three New Brunswickers for their exceptional courage and bravery in October. Alexander Bruce Scott of Saint John was presented with the Star of Courage and Robert Edward Dorie of Long Creek and Donald Morrison of Dutch Valley received the Medal of Bravery.

The same month, the Governor General also presented the Medal of Military Valour to Cpl. Joshua O'Toole of Hampton, and the Meritorious Service Medal to Maj. Timothy Charles Byers of Belleisle Creek, Chief Warrant Officers Robert Daly of Lincoln and Mark Henry Miller of Minto, and Capt. Tyler Lavigne of Bathurst.

We honour Mrs. Mabel Girouard of Bathurst, who was selected by the Royal Canadian Legion as the 2010-2011 Memorial (Silver) Cross Mother. She is the mother of Chief Warrant Officer Robert Michel Girouard, who was killed serving our country in Afghanistan in November 2006.

We also recognize business leaders Bill and Ed Barrett and Jean-Claude Savoie and former premier and ambassador to the United States Frank McKenna who were named to the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame in a ceremony last week.

This year also saw the return of a wonderful cultural event in our province. For the first time in 24 years, the New Brunswick Indian Summer Games were held.

Hosted by Elsipogtog First Nation over five days, the Games brought together more than 1,000 athletes aged five to 20 from all of New Brunswick's 15 First Nations communities.

Another proud moment for New Brunswick came in July. That's when the 2010 International Association of Athletics Federations World Junior Championships took place in Moncton.

About 2,000 of the world's best young athletes and team officials from over 170 countries participated in this event.

Among these athletes were four young New Brunswickers: Ryan Cassidy of Grande-Digue, Adam Gaudes of Fredericton; Caleb Jones of Saint John; and Geneviève Lalonde of Moncton.

All New Brunswickers are very proud of these young athletes from our province. We're equally proud of Greater Moncton for its excellent work in hosting this prestigious event.

Also in July this year, our province and the State of Maine made a commitment to establish the Maine-New Brunswick Cultural Initiative.

This will explore opportunities for mutual benefits from strengthened cultural relations. Furthermore, it will support planning for the 2014 Congrès Mondial Acadien – l'Acadie des Terres et Forêts.

This event will be held in northwestern New Brunswick, northern Maine and Témiscouata, Quebec.

Next year, the Canada Winter Games will be held in our neighbouring province of Nova Scotia. Many athletes, coaches and officials from our province will be representing New Brunswick at that event. We take this opportunity to wish all of them the very best of luck.

Finally, we celebrate the designation last month of the Stonehammer Geopark as the first UNESCO-supported geopark in North America. This status highlights the Saint John and Fundy region's exceptional geological heritage for the entire world to see.

Condolences

However, 2010 was also marked by tragedy for our province. In January, New Brunswick lost RCMP Sgt. Mark Gallagher. He died during the tragic earthquake in Haiti while taking part in the peacekeeping mission there.

We recognise his wife, Lisa Gallagher, who is with us today in the Legislature.

His death while serving the cause of peace touched so many New Brunswickers.

In his memory, the Friends of Mark Gallagher have been working throughout our province to raise money to build the Sgt. Mark Gallagher Memorial Vocational School in Rivière Froide, Haiti. The school is intended to train up to 500 students in 12 separate trades.

We also honour the memory of former MLA Roger "Butch" Wedge who passed away this past February. He is well remembered for his service as MLA for Bay du Vin from 1982 to 1987.

We sadly note the recent passing of former chief of Metepenagiag First Nation Noah Augustine. Noah was a passionate defender of his community and tireless worker for aboriginal rights. We mourn his death along with the people of Metepenagiag and his many friends throughout our province.

Introduction

As this new legislative session begins, our province is facing significant challenges.

The effects of the recent worldwide recession are still being experienced in New Brunswick. Unemployment has risen over the last year and many of our communities have been affected by job losses.

Furthermore, the Province is facing a fiscal crisis.

Last month, Standard & Poor's cut its outlook on New Brunswick's credit rating from stable to negative.

This came in the wake of an increase in the provincial debt of about 50 per cent over the last four years. The debt is now more than $8 billion.

And it's projected to reach $9.5 billion next year and over $10 billion in 2012.

Meanwhile, the Province is running a significant deficit. If it goes unchecked, the gap between spending and revenue could soon hit a billion dollars a year.

Ultimately, this could impair the Province's delivery of social programs that New Brunswickers need.

This situation is clearly unsustainable.

Your government has come forward with a comprehensive plan to change the culture of government and to address the challenges facing our province through responsible fiscal management, citizen engagement and focused leadership.

This plan details the actions your government will take to put our province back on the road to prosperity while addressing New Brunswickers' priorities, including jobs, education and health care.

Economic Development and Jobs

Your government's plan contains many measures to put New Brunswick first in job creation and promote economic development throughout our province.

These include the introduction of a new, 21st-century economic development model for New Brunswick. This model seeks to change the culture of economic development in our province.

This new model will ensure full transparency in the decision-making process; the use of private-sector knowledge and experience in evaluating applications; opening up the regulation-making process; more opportunities for partnerships between government and experts; and seamless access to programs and services offered by the Province.

This model will result in the establishment of a new economic development vehicle for our province called Invest NB. This Crown corporation will bring private and public sector knowledge together to foster real economic growth throughout New Brunswick.

In keeping with this new model, the New Brunswick Business Council will be holding a major conference next week entitled Future NB. This three-day conference will bring upwards of 200 people from all sectors together to discuss the current state and future direction of the New Brunswick economy.

Your government has also engaged New Brunswickers through forums like the Forestry Summit held in Fredericton this month. This engagement tool has enabled people to bring forward their ideas for developing programs to advance economic development in forestry, which is New Brunswick's largest sector.

Meanwhile, your government will make job creation a priority province-wide, notably in the North.

Under the northern initiative, your government will continue to foster economic growth by working with key stakeholders. These include community economic development agencies, community business development corporations and partners in all regions.

In addition, your government will establish two important job creation funds.

The first will be a four-year, $200-million Northern New Brunswick Job Creation Fund. It will cover the entire north from Madawaska to the Acadian Peninsula and will include the regions of Restigouche, Chaleur and Grand Falls.

This fund will help stimulate economic growth and promote job creation throughout these regions.

The second new fund will be a four-year, $50-million Miramichi Regional Job Creation Fund. It will help this particular region to recover from the effects of the downturn in the forestry sector.

Another way to promote economic development is through investments in innovation.

However, your government recognizes that New Brunswick's potential for innovation has been largely untapped for several years. In fact, our province has been receiving less than one per cent of federal R&D funding. That's far less than New Brunswick's fair share based on GDP and population.

For these reasons, your government has set a goal of doubling the collective R&D expenditures of government, industry and universities.

To this end, your government will capitalize on the federal government's review of its R&D programs. This will be an opportunity for your government to work with other provinces to effect changes to these programs. The aim will be to ensure these changes are more beneficial to New Brunswick companies and help them to succeed.

Your government believes in fostering the growth of small businesses in our province.

To ensure New Brunswick's small businesses continue to thrive, your government will reduce barriers to their growth and development by lowering the small business tax rate, providing more tools and programs to ensure greater access to capital and reducing the regulatory and administrative burden on small business.

Your government also recognizes the importance of each sector of the provincial economy.

In particular, tourism is a billion-dollar industry for our province. It supports more than 34,000 jobs and over 3,000 businesses in New Brunswick.

That's why your government will continue the work of the Tourism Advisory Committee in implementing the 2010-2013 Provincial Tourism Strategy. This strategy is important to the continued success of New Brunswick's tourism industry.

Cutting-edge digital technology is also important to our tourism industry. This technology presents opportunities to reach potential visitors in new, efficient and affordable ways.

Your government sees these opportunities. It will ensure tourism marketing takes full advantage of these technologies and that this marketing involves the input and engagement of New Brunswickers.

A major draw for visitors in New Brunswick is our network of provincial parks.

However, your government believes that the provincial park system can be enhanced so that it will be even more attractive to tourists, boost the tourism industry and be environmentally sustainable.

For this reason, your government will explore options to modernize the system to maximize its benefits to New Brunswick.

Likewise, your government will support the continued development of the Fundy Trail Parkway.

Your government also recognizes the contributions made by New Brunswick's farming, fishing and aquaculture industries to the provincial economy.

To support the potato industry, the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries will work with producers to improve the quality and yield of produce.

It will do so by amending legislation to ensure only low-virus seed potatoes are planted in New Brunswick. In this undertaking, thresholds will be established in consultation with producers.

Your government will partner with farmers to develop a cost-of-production index that will be used to assess the impact of government decisions on the sector.

The department will consider tools to contribute to the fishing industry's sustainability and strengthen its voice.

The department will also help grow New Brunswick's aquaculture sector. It will collaborate with industry on the implementation of R&D priorities outlined in the Finfish and Shellfish Aquaculture Development Strategies.

In addition, the department will work on projects related to fish and shellfish health and the development of alternative species for culture. This will be done with research institutions including the Institute for Coastal Zone Research, RPC and the Atlantic Veterinary College.

As well, the department will continue working with aquaculturists to implement on-farm standard operating practices. These will improve eligibility for third-party certification programs and assist in reducing business risks.

Meanwhile, your government will foster the growth of the mineral and petroleum sectors in New Brunswick. In particular, the expansion of the natural gas sector in an environmentally responsible manner will be promoted.

New regulations will be developed under the *Petroleum Act* to govern the exploration and extraction of minerals and gases.

And your government will adopt a phased approach to Environmental Impact Assessments for oil and gas projects. This will safeguard water supplies and ensure landowners have advance notice of exploration activity.

The Department of Natural Resources will also continue working with stakeholders to address challenges facing our forestry sector.

Your government will introduce a multi-year silviculture plan for both Crown lands and private woodlots with the goal of improving forest productivity as well as wages for workers.

In addition, the department will ensure Crown land continues to be available for trails for use by the ATV Federation and Snowmobile Federation and their members.

It will also work with the New Brunswick Wildlife Federation to review the moose hunt draw process for the benefit of hunters whose names haven't been drawn in over a decade.

In consultation with stakeholders, your government will also develop a new Wood-First Policy. It will support New Brunswick wood producers by promoting the use of wood in provincial buildings.

As part of this, pilot sites will be established in provincial buildings to show the value of using wood pellets as a heating source.

Another vital part of your government's economic development agenda is New Brunswick's transportation network.

Developing a more strategic, integrated and competitive transportation system will support more international trade and fuel New Brunswick's economic growth.

To these ends, significant progress has been made in building a modern highway network. This includes the development of the Route 1 Gateway and Trade Corridor.

A crucial link in this corridor is the Saint John Harbour Bridge. However, there has been a great dispute in recent years about its ownership and the ongoing tolls.

However, your government is pleased to report that provincial officials are now in discussions with the Government of Canada and the Saint John Harbour Bridge Authority.

They are finalizing an agreement that will result in the transfer of the bridge to the Province and the removal of the tolls for all bridge users.

The Atlantic Gateway will present New Brunswick with many strategic advantages. To make the most of these, ongoing collaboration in areas of policy and regulatory reform will be essential.

Your government will continue working with the federal government, the other Atlantic Provinces and private sector stakeholders to develop the Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor.

Changes to the *Public Purchasing Act* may be needed to ensure New Brunswick-based businesses have a fair chance to bid on provincial government contracts.

That's why your government will consult with stakeholders about changes to the Act. These stakeholders will include outside agencies and the vendor community.

Measures will also be taken to enhance competitive opportunities for New Brunswick companies.

In addition, your government will introduce improvements to the public reporting of provincial tenders and resulting contracts. It will also review fees charged under the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and introduce measures to remove them.

Education and Early Childhood

Along with this economic agenda, your government will focus on putting New Brunswick first with better education - especially for our children.

Your government believes all children in New Brunswick deserve the opportunity and supports to achieve their full potential.

Your government will work with stakeholders to improve New Brunswick's literacy, early childhood, primary and secondary education, and lifelong learning programs.

The early childhood development sector will work collaboratively with the primary and secondary education system under the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This will ensure better supports and services can be provided to children at an early age.

Your government will also work with families and stakeholders to establish more spaces for toddlers and infants; create more early childhood training programs; increase compensation for staff; and make the system more inclusive in rural and urban areas and for children with disabilities and other special needs.

In addition, your government will produce an updated action plan on the implementation of the MacKay report to promote greater inclusiveness, and work with and honour the commitments made to the Gino LeBlanc Commission to address the needs of francophone schools.

You government will also review the decision regarding the Early French Second Language entry point. In this process, a public consultation task force will be formed to determine the right direction and propose new solutions.

Your government will further engage the people of New Brunswick to discuss learning. It will work with community partners on ways to better support a culture of learning within our province and enhance the roles of District Education Councils by ensuring more stakeholder input and better governance opportunities.

Meanwhile, your government will actively promote high student achievement throughout the education system to prepare every child for success in life.

Of course, our children require safe and healthy learning environments in order to be high achievers. Your government will address the challenges posed by our province's aging education infrastructure.

As well, your government will address the issue of bullying. It will work with teachers, support staff, parents, districts and students on a multi-phased approach.

This will include the introduction of enhanced legislation and sharing of best practices to ensure New Brunswick schools provide a safe learning environment. Supports will be put in place to ensure that this destructive behaviour is reduced in our schools.

Your government will also support the efforts of teachers through a new Teaching Supplies Fund. This will provide $250 to every teacher to buy educational items for their classrooms each year.

As well, a new community service requirement will be introduced for high school students. This will strengthen civic education in our province's schools and promote citizen engagement.

The promotion of literacy will also be a priority of your government. The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will be implementing a new action plan to promote adult literacy.

New initiatives will also be launched to ensure greater access to post-secondary education for all New Brunswickers - especially those groups of students traditionally underrepresented at the post-secondary level.

Your government will also collaborate with stakeholders to make the New Brunswick Timely Completion Benefit more responsive to the needs of university and college students.

These measures will enable New Brunswick to build a larger workforce that'll help meet the needs of employers in the coming years.

Your government will supplement these measures by providing predictable sources of multi-year funding for New Brunswick's publicly funded post-secondary institutions; and promoting research at the graduate and faculty level.

As well, your government will be providing quality apprenticeship programs. For this purpose, a new governance model is being developed by the Province and the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board.

This new model will allow for a broader representation on the board and enhance the board's decision-making authority. This will result in more timely decisions with respect to designating and rescinding trades and will make the program more effective in responding to labour market needs.

Your government will also help individuals with disabilities to access employment by developing a Transition-to-Work Strategy for youth with disabilities leaving high school and enhancing access to on-the-job employment supports for persons with disabilities.

Health and Wellness

As these improvements are carried out, action will also be taken to put New Brunswick first with better health care.

Your government will demonstrate its commitment to ensure local communities have input into health care management by amending the *Regional Health Authorities Act*. The amendment will reinstate elected members to Regional Health Authority boards in time for the 2012 election.

Moreover, your government recognizes that quality health care services must continue to be delivered in people's language of choice in all regions of New Brunswick.

To this end, both regional health authorities will be engaged in the development of action plans to improve the quality of services and ensure services are provided in both official languages.

At the same time, your government will continue efforts to meet the recommendations of the New Brunswick Mental Health Task Force.

By the spring of 2011, your government will introduce a Mental Health Action Plan. This plan will include a vision, guiding principles, and defined goals and commitments to revitalize the mental health system.

Your government will also foster New Brunswickers' well-being by investing in wellness initiatives for youth, seniors and communities, and exploring opportunities to promote sport and recreation.

Your government will support research opportunities in the field of senior care, such as those presented by the Université de Moncton's Centre d'études du vieillissement and by the Atlantic Institute for Aging Care, that build upon inspiring practices and lead to better services and supports.

As well, work will begin this year to revamp the provincial physician recruitment strategy to ensure your government can recruit and retain the physicians needed to provide quality health care. A commitment has been made to report results publicly in recruiting and retaining physicians on a regular basis.

Your government recognizes the financial burden placed on New Brunswickers suffering from multiple-sclerosis. Work will begin toward creating a $500,000 fund to assist patients seeking treatments.

Your government realizes that innovation in primary health care is pivotal and that support for everyday health care is critical.

A new, comprehensive diabetes strategy will be launched in 2011 with a focus on three key areas: detection, prevention and disease management. In addition, your government will provide more resources to support diabetes education and management at the community level.

Managing Responsibly

While acting on all these commitments, your government will put New Brunswick first by managing public finances responsibly.

The provisions of the *Fiscal Responsibility and Balanced Budget Act* will be respected.

This session, your government will table the Province's capital estimates for the 2011-2012 fiscal year and an economic and fiscal update for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Also, legislation will be introduced to begin reducing the corporate income tax rate on small business by 50 per cent from the current five per cent to an eventual tax rate of 2.5 per cent.

The scheduled general corporate income tax rate reduction to 10 per cent on July 1, 2011, will proceed.

However, to promote New Brunswick's fiscal stability, your government will implement no further corporate income tax rate reductions and introduce legislation to cancel future tax reductions for the highest-income earners in the province.

The *Assessment Act* will be amended to cap growth in property assessments for all homeowners at three per cent for two years. During this time, your government will work with stakeholders to arrive at a fair and effective property tax system for the long term.

In 2011, homeowners aged 65 and over will see the benefits of the cap in the growth of property assessments. Following consultations with senior groups, municipalities, and other stakeholders, in 2012 your government intends to initiate property tax relief for homeowners aged 65 and over. This initiative is part of an overall strategy to help seniors stay in their own homes longer.

Service New Brunswick will work with other departments to enhance its ability to deliver more services to the public. And the New Brunswick Internal Services Agency will increase the efficiency and effective of interdepartmental service delivery.

Focused Leadership

All of these actions demonstrate your government's commitment to put New Brunswick first with focused leadership and to change the culture of government.

Your government will also act on this commitment by addressing New Brunswick's energy challenges.

Your government will put in place a legislative committee to ensure that the refurbishment of Point Lepreau is the number one priority for NB Power and help bring that project to a successful close.

NB Power has been directed to establish a mechanism to implement a three-year freeze of electricity rates for New Brunswick ratepayers. That work is underway.

As well, an Energy Commission has been established to develop a progressive, long-term provincial energy policy and provide guidance on both the future direction of NB Power and New Brunswick's energy sector.

The commission will release a 10-year strategy with specific recommendations in 2011.

Last week, there was a major energy announcement between Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. That project will create enormous economic development, clean and sustainable energy and pave the way towards regional cooperation throughout Atlantic Canada.

Your government fully supports this initiative and will actively pursue opportunities with all regional partners to create economic wealth and a stable energy market in the province of New Brunswick.

Your government will further demonstrate focused leadership through the introduction of important new legislation.

A bill will be introduced to allow New Brunswick credit unions to become members of a new body called Atlantic Central. This entity will combine Brunswick Credit Union Federation and Credit Union Central of Prince Edward Island with Credit Union Central of Nova Scotia.

This amalgamation will give New Brunswick credit unions greater access to capital, enhanced support and better long-term control over costs - all of which will benefit their New Brunswick members.

This session, your government will also introduce a bill to amend the *Pension Benefits Act*. It will enable New Brunswick to become a signatory to the Canadian Association of Pension Supervisory Authority's Proposed Agreement Respecting Multi-Jurisdictional Pension Plans.

This agreement provides a clear framework for the administration and regulation of pension plans that have members in more than one jurisdiction and will provide a more efficient and effective regulatory system for these pension plans in New Brunswick.

Your government will also bring forward amendments to the *Motor Vehicle Act* to prohibit actions that distract drivers.

These changes will prohibit programming or adjusting a GPS system while operating a motor vehicle and the use of hand-held cellular telephones, texting devices and entertainment devices while driving.

Hands-free cellular devices will continue to be permitted and exceptions will be made for emergency personnel in the performance of their duties and for citizens to call 911.

Your government will also work with stakeholders on a new schedule for the provincial motor vehicle inspection program. A decision will be made on possible changes to the program by the end of 2011.

As well, changes made to the graduated drivers' licence programs in 2009 will be re-examined.

The Department of Public Safety will consult with youth and other stakeholders in the spring of 2011, before tne end of the school year and make recommendations by the fall of next year.

A permanent Provincial Roundtable on Crime and Public Safety will also be created. It will facilitate greater engagement between the Province and key crime prevention stakeholders.

Your government will also demonstrate focused leadership by keeping its commitment to increase recycling in New Brunswick. A renewed, stakeholder-driven plan will be launched as the next step in waste reduction and diversion.

And your government will forge a new local governance and service delivery system in New Brunswick.

However, this change will be led at the community and regional levels so that it will be effective, efficient and fair. Citizens and stakeholders will be full partners with your government in examining new mechanisms for achieving effective and efficient service delivery and studying community viability.

Every community will have opportunity to participate fully in designing its future. And no community will see its local and cultural identity lost through this process.

As well, your government will give communities the opportunity to take part in devising new municipal funding arrangements and establishing shared service delivery.

The *Official Languages Act* is an integral part of New Brunswick history and has had a profound and positive impact on the development of our province.

Your government will continue to promote an officially bilingual society and to strengthen the culture and traditions of both linguistic communities in New Brunswick.

Your government is committed to engaging citizens and governing more openly and transparently.

As an example, every department and agency of government will hold a minimum of two public town hall meetings every year, as well as two roundtables with stakeholder groups.

Your government will fulfill its commitment to introduce legislation to create a Lobbyist Registry, to establish a provincial *Referendum Act* and to enable more free votes in the Legislative Assembly.

As well, Prof. Don Desserud has agreed to work with third-party leaders to ensure their voices are heard in the committee process and in all major government initiatives in keeping with your government's commitment.

Your government will also promote public engagement with New Brunswick's First Nations.

Roundtable meetings with First Nation leaders and the Premier will be held to ensure aboriginal communities have meaningful, ongoing consultation with the Province.

As well, your government will hold the first-ever Cabinet meeting at a First Nation. This will foster a closer relationship between the Province and the First Nation peoples and communities of New Brunswick.

Your government will also work with key stakeholders, including native communities, on implementing the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

And your government will ensure New Brunswick's response to Jordan's Principle will be a "child first" one. It will prevent delays and jurisdictional disputes from disrupting necessary public services such as health, child welfare and special education plans.

The implementation of Jordan's Principle in New Brunswick will be done in partnership between your government, the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet (Wolastoqiyik) peoples of New Brunswick, and the Government of Canada.

Likewise, your government will consult stakeholders to modernize the Children with Special Needs Program; establish a Seniors' Charter of Rights that will ensure seniors are treated with dignity and respect; and develop Community Inclusion Networks across the province over the next several months. This will allow the implementation of the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, *Overcoming Poverty Together*, to begin at the local level.

Beyond these measures, your government will show focused leadership by boosting immigration to New Brunswick.

More immigrants are needed to help our province address labour shortages, create prosperity and grow our population.

Your government will work with the federal government to attract newcomers and help them settle in our province and improve the process of recognition of foreign qualifications.

Conclusion

Over the course of this session, ministers will provide more details regarding the initiatives contained in this Speech from the Throne.

Amendments to a variety of Acts of the Legislative Assembly will be introduced and debated. This will ensure your government continues to improve services offered to the public.

Your government will also provide details on other policy and program matters of importance to all New Brunswickers.

Altogether, these actions by your government will lay the foundation for a stronger, more prosperous New Brunswick.

They will create jobs and grow the economy for New Brunswickers. They will stop and reverse our province's fiscal decline.

They will improve the quality and accessibility of health care and education in New Brunswick.

They will enhance local governance in every community and region.

And they'll be done by a government that is committed to working and engaging with the people of this great province.

May divine Providence continue to bless New Brunswick and its residents, and guide this Assembly in its deliberations.